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VACATION VERSES

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VACATION VERSES

BY
ALICE M. DOWD

BUFFALO
CHARLES WELLS MOULTON
1891

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1890,
By Alice M. Dowd.

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TO

MY SISTER

I GIVE THIS HANDFUL OF

WILD-FLOWERS

GATHERED DURING SUMMER RAMBLES

AMONG THE HILLS.

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VACATION VERSES.

AU REVOIR.

WE greet the glad vacation
That comes with flying feet;
Its pleasant recreation
Will make our year complete.

Yet mingling with our gladness
Are thoughts akin to pain;
Farewells are said with sadness,
And loss is blent with gain.

But memory will cherish
The days that come no more,
They will not wholly perish
When they are days of yore,

If, when they have departed
With all their hopes and fears,
They leave us stronger hearted
To meet the coming years.

MIDSUMMER REST.

THE calm of lakes and woods is ours,
The beauty of late-coming flowers,
The peaceful sky
Whose light glints down to us between
Pine trees of solemn, tender green,
Upreaching high.

The splendor of the sunset glow
Lies trembling on the lake below
Where drifts our boat,
And music-measures from the shore
Come to us faintly, as we o'er
The waters float.

In our horizon, far away,
The lightning flashes seem at play,
In grandeur bright;
They add new glory to our world,
We reck not of the storm unfurled
Beyond our sight.

For us to-day is rest and peace,
The blessing of complete release
From toil and care ;
But life moves on ; our world is round ;
We float toward this horizon bound,
Though unaware.

A store of strength for future days
Comes to us in all unseen ways,
Above our ken ;
In future days we will be strong,
And distant echoes of a song
Shall reach us then.

LEAF AND BRANCH.

THE leaves grew fair
In the Summer air,
But they faded, one by one.
Where leaves grew fair
The bough is bare,
Now Summer's work is done.

My days were fair,—
I wrought with care,—
I toiled beneath the sun.
The days are fled,—
The past is dead,—
What lives when work is done?

Where leaves grew sere
New buds appear,
When leaves are lying low;
And reaching high
To air and sky
Next year the branches grow.

The past is rife
With latent life,
Not lost, the long ago.
New buds unfold
From out the old,
And some are sure to grow.

ROSE-BAY.

ACROSS the field the fire had sped
And turned the green earth black;
Its breath brought death, and where it spread,
Destruction marked its track.

But beauty with the Summer came,
The "fire-weed" found its place,
And crimson flowers, like ghosts of flame,
Re-clothed the field with grace.

They spring from soil where fire and strife
And pain prepare the way;
They find in loss a claim to life,
They crown the hill with bay.

DALIBARDA.

FOUND IN THE ADIRONDACKS.

NO dear pet name thy blossoms know,
Like those which greet the passing feet,
And by the wayside love to grow;
Yet are thy flowers as sweet
As those which garden walls enclose,
And thou art sister to the rose.

Alone within the mountain glen,
In solitude thy life must be,
Remote from busy haunts of men;
Their praise is not for thee.
Like stars thy pure white blossoms rise
With dewy faces toward the skies.

Thy heart-shaped leaves fulfil their trust,
Take earthly dole and heavenly dower,
And from the dew-drop and the dust
They mould a perfect flower.
Dear plant, that dwellest here apart,
Thy leaves are fashioned like a heart.

BLUEBELLS.

CHILL November winds are sighing,
And the fallen leaves are lying
On the ground;
Restless wailing of the breeze,
Wandering among the trees,
Is the only sound.

Golden-rod has lost the glory
Of its sunshine, and grown hoary
In the frost;
And through all the dreary day
Mountain-tops lie cold and gray,
By the shadows crossed.

Bluebells in the rock's protection
Still give back in fair reflection
Heaven's blue,
Which, between the clouds of gray,
In the dark November day,
Ever shineth through.

Ah! the bluebells vainly linger;
Soon the frost-king's deadly finger
Proves more strong.
Earth's sad winds are wailing still,
And the shadows on the hill
Grow more dark and long.

OUR JOURNEY.

A PATH that leads amid Spring blossoms sweet,
Where buttercups and daisies line the way,
And, bathed in morning dew, we idly stray,
Till onward lured, with half reluctant feet,
By promises of blessings more complete;
The path grows wider with advancing day,
Rugged and steep, but yet we can not stay,
We have no choice, no turning, no retreat.

A Voice has said to us: "This is the way,
Walk ye therein." We would not disobey,
We know not where the journey's end may lie,
What rest and welcome wait us by and by,
But dimly we discern, and far away,
The mountain summits mingling with the sky.

HEART'S-EASE.

PURPLE and gold —
Royal the hues that thy petals unfold;
Why should these colors be
Emblems of royalty,
Purple and gold?

Regal is gold!
Sign of earth's riches, resources untold;
Many a door may be
Opened with golden key.
Regal is gold.

Purple as well
Has its own story of blessing to tell;
"Blessed are they that mourn,"
Holy, the crowns of thorn;
Purple as well.

Though it means grief,
Shows us a royalty passing belief.
Was not earth's greatest King
"Perfect through suffering,"
Victor through grief?

Heart's-ease must hold
Blended the colors of purple and gold,
Colors of joy and pain,—
Thus royal hearts must gain
Heart's-ease to hold.

FALLEN LEAVES.

WHEN leaves are sere beneath our tread,
When Summer blooms and birds have fled,
And sad winds sigh in branches high
A requiem for the days that die,
Look up, dear heart, see overhead
The arching branches widely spread,
The work of leaves and days long dead,
And o'er them bends a peaceful sky,
When leaves are sere.

Though hopes like withered leaves are dead,
Let not too bitter tears be shed,
For life has nobler grown thereby,
And wider skies above us lie.
Look up, dear heart, be comforted,
When leaves are sere.

IMMORTELLE.

IT lined our path that Summer day,
As through the fields we went;
"It shall go with us, far away,"
We said, in glad content.

"Not like the other Summer flowers,
That wither in our hands;
This blossom shall be always ours,
It surely understands

"The secret that it keeps so well
When brighter bloom departs;
The blossoms of the immortelle
Shall reassure our hearts."

That Summer day is gone for aye;
Its passing pleasure told:
No more among the fields we stray;
The year is growing old.

But blossoms brought from Arcady
We love and cherish well;
Fair flowers of hope and memory,
Blossoms of immortelle.

IN A STORMY NIGHT.

Translated from the German.

THE sky is gray, no light of star
Shines from the heavenly host afar,
But hurrying clouds assemble.
Tempestuous breaks the storm anear,
The billows roll and toss in fear,
The bells are sounding deep and drear,
And human hearts must tremble.

Lord, God, protected by Thy hand
Be every ship upon the strand
By tempest tossed and driven;
And every throbbing heart, we pray,
That like a ship on stormy way
Bears burdens through life's troubled day,
To it Thy aid be given.

GOLDEN-ROD.

COMMONPLACE,
With an unaffected grace,
By the dusty road unfolding,
Sunshine into blossoms moulding,
Every careless, nodding plume
Bountiful with golden bloom:—
Common faces thus seem fair
For the sunshine that they wear.

Bravely bright,
Catching and reflecting light,
In earth's barren places living,
Getting little for its giving,
It unconsciously bestows
Heaven's light, whereby it grows,
Adding to the weary way
Its fresh grace for every day.

In the frost
Will its blossoming be lost

When the plumes, with silver hoary,
Slowly fade from golden glory?
Not if in our lives the grace
Of the beautiful finds place.
Sunny lives, its blossoms say,
Have brave hearts for every day.

PEARLS.

From the German of Rückert.

O LOOK above, if e'er the world thy thought confuses;
In the eternal sky no star its pathway loses.

If thou wouldst first thank God for all the joys that bless thee,
No time were left to mourn the troubles that distress thee.

Learn this, O heart! 'tis easy, upright and true to be,
But to appear so maketh a heavy task for thee.

Before each stands a picture, his life's ideal, sweet;
As long as he unlike it is, his peace is incomplete.

THE GRAVE IN THE BUSENTO.

From the German of August von Platen.

IN the night Busento waters hear the sound of mournful singing,
And the river voices answer, echoes from their whirlpools flinging.

Shadow-like the Goths assemble, who for Alaric are weeping.
Alaric, their brave young leader, in the arms of Death is sleeping.

Far his home whom they so sadly now within the grave are laying,—
And upon his shoulders lightly golden ringlets still are playing.

On the banks of the Busento where the reeds and rushes quiver,
There they made another channel, turned aside the ancient river.

In its bed they laid their hero, with his steed and armor laid him,
Where the rushes keep the secret, bending o'er the grave they made him.

Back again the stream is guided, to its former channel flowing,
So that ever o'er his slumber music of its waves is going.

And his warriors sang the chorus: "Sleep in honor never broken;
Roman greed shall not be able of thy grave to find a token."

Thus they sang, and through the army of the Goths his praises sounded.
Roll them on, Busento waters, onward unto seas unbounded!

CHILDREN'S WORSHIP.

From the German of Karl Gerok.

THE sweet Sabbath bells are all ringing,
And calling the people to prayer;
At home sit three little ones singing,
While sunshine gleams bright in their hair.

Too restless and small and unruly
Are they to sit still in a pew;
Yet will they observe the day duly,
In the way that the older folks do.

A hymn-book each one of them carries,
And holds upside down, with great care;
And the singing of these happy fairies
Is as clear and as free as the air.

What you're singing not one of you dreameth,
Each sings in a different tone,
Yet sweetly some melody seemeth
To rise toward the heavenly throne.

There ever your angels' pure faces
  Behold Him, the Father above,
But sweet through the heavenly places,
  And dear to the heart of His love

Are the songs of the little ones sounding.
  Sing ever! In rivalry free,
Bird-songs, through the garden resounding,
  Are rising from every tree.

Sing ever! We sing, older growing,
  Presuming that we understand,
Yet often, we also, unknowing
  Hold the book wrong side up in our hand.

Sing ever! From earth's grandest altar,
  The music most noble and clear,—
What is it? Child-accents that falter,—
  A breath in the Infinite ear.

WRONG RECKONING.

From the German of Joh. Nepomuk Vogel.

A SHREWD accountant, contented to stay
Alone with his figures by night and by day,
Allowed not his pen to be out of his sight;
Where others met failure he brought results right.

But over his reckoning the swift years sped;
Already their fingers had silvered his head;
Already Death asked him: "Friend, art thou prepared?
'Tis time for our little account to be squared."

The old man feebly crept from his place;
He would gaze once more on the earth's fair face.
The roses were blossoming everywhere,—
He saw only figures clouding the air.

The fields were rejoicing with song-birds' trill,—
He heard but the scratching of his quill.
The clouds were gleaming in golden light,—
The blackness of ink-drops blurred his sight.

Remorsefully now a glance he cast
Upon the mistakes in account with his past;
The last page was reached in his day-book fair,
And showed him a life mis-reckoned there.

ETERNITY.

From the German of Robert Waldmüller.

IN heavenly peace serene they circle yonder;
No sound from them may greet our mortal ears;
Forever on their peaceful way they wander;
Unheard, the mystic music of the spheres.

The winds speed swift from earth's remotest places;
World-messengers, they hasten to and fro;
Yet bring they, from the realm of star-lit spaces,
No tidings of the lands to which they go.

No sound to listening ear of mortal reacheth;
The soul alone o'er space and time soars free;
To it the far-off spheric measure teacheth
One word of its grand song — Eternity!

A SONNET.

From the German of Rückert.

THE sky, a missive held in hand divine,
Has ever kept its color, bright and pure,
And to the end of time will it endure,—
This scroll of blue, where golden letters shine.
Within this missive is contained a line
Of God's own Scripture which might well assure
Our hearts if we could read it, but obscure
For very brightness is the grand design.

But when the sun's round seal is torn away,
At night, we see, traced up and down the sky,
This writing, hidden from the eye of day:
"Our God is Love, and Love can never lie!"
This word alone! Yet human wisdom may
New depths of meaning evermore descry.

SEA AND SKY.

From the German of Schultz.

THE sky looks down upon the sea;
Yonder he would so gladly be;
He dreams that in the watery deeps
His stars are buried, and he weeps.

But skyward, wistful, looks the sea;
Yonder she would so gladly be;
She knows not that within her breast
The shining stars have found their rest.

ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

From the German of Uhland.

SO lightly didst thou come and go,
A fleeting guest in earthly land;
Whither? and whence? we only know,—
Out of God's hand, into God's hand.

THE HEART.

From the German of Hermann Neumann.

TWO chambers has the heart,
For Pleasure
And Sorrow set apart.

If Happiness awakes
Brief respite
In slumber Sorrow takes.

O Happiness, beware!
Speak lightly,
Lest Sorrow waken there!

AN APHORISM.

From the German of Julie Burow.

WHO has not suffered knows but half of life;
Who ne'er has failed ne'er entered on the strife.
He never has rejoiced who never grieved;
Who never doubted, never has believed.

AT NIGHT.

From the German of Ernst Scherenberg.

'TIS night; the earth is dreaming;
Above it, in the sky,
In solemn, silent splendor,
Star-pictures lie.

'Tis night; before my vision
In lonely grandeur glow
The quiet, starry pictures
Of long ago.

LOVE-SONG.

From the German of Wernher.

THOU art mine, I am thine;
Know it by a certain sign.
Fast locked thou art
Within my heart,
And because I've lost the key
There must thou forever be.

THE PRIZE.

From the German of Johann Fischer.

THERE is no mountain peak so high,
No deep ravine so low,
But up so high a bird may fly,
So deep a sunbeam go.

Wert thou a pearl within the sea,
Or Alpine gold above,
So deep, so high, I'd go to thee,
To win thy heart, my love.

CONSOLATION.

From the German of Karl Batz.

NO joy so deep, so pure, below,
A tear may not beneath it flow.
No bitter grief so heavy lies,
But hope mounts o'er it to the skies.

CRYING FOR THE MOON.

I WANT the moon, it shines so bright,
With such a clear and silver light;
But other people don't agree,
They say the moon's too big for me.
Our house would be a wondrous sight,
Lit up so grandly through the night.
We'd need no lamp-light then, you see,
And so I'm not contented quite,
I want the moon.

I have the moonshine, pure and white;
It ought to fill me with delight,—
How glorious the moon must be!
Perhaps 'twould tarnish easily
Within my grasp,—yet, wrong or right,
I want the moon.

CLOUD-THOUGHTS.

EVER drifting on the shifting
Currents of the restless air,
Like the thoughts our hearts are lifting,
Clouds are floating here and there.

Golden clouds, so deeply burning,
Shadowing a future fair,
Emblems of the spirit's yearning,
Are our castles in the air.

Dark gray clouds of sin and sorrow
Often close around us lie ;
Clouds of doubt for the to-morrow
Hide from us the deep of sky.

White clouds soaring highest ever
With pure peaceful beauty fraught,
These express our best endeavor,
And our trustful upward thought.

Thus below earth-clouds are flitting,
And the tender blue above

Bends unchanging, best befitting
Token of a heaven of love.

Sometime, though we wait till even,
Will the eager asking red,
Mounting up in the bright heaven,
Meet the deep blue overhead.

TIME.

AN empty cup is placed within our hands,
Which we at wayside wells and inns may fill
To quench our thirst. Clear water from the rill
At first we find, but soon through desert lands
We wander, where no pleasant shade-tree stands,
And from the rocks but bitter drops distill.
We journey onward with undaunted will,
Still eager that our feverish demands
May find what they desire. We mix our wine
With rue and fennel, and with heart's-ease, too;
'Tis bitter-sweet. Our souls are filled with ruth;
But from the western hills a breath divine
Brings strength and peace, and kindles hope anew,—
Beyond the sunset lies the fount of youth.

CLASS POEM.

W. S. N. S.

A LITTLE while our paths of life
Have touched and led us side by side,
But now we go to sterner strife
Apart, earth's harvest fields are wide.

Our dreams have been of high success,
Of brave achievement, bravely done;
May we, unsatisfied with less,
Press on till dream and deed are one.

Thus glorify the common task,
Till all its jarring discords cease,
And life shall bring the boon we ask,
The perfect strength that giveth peace.

At last our lives shall meet again
And enter on the life unseen;
We breathe a brave farewell, till then,
"And Mizpah," God will watch between.

TRIENNIAL POEM.

W. S. N. S.

WITH joyful hearts again we greet
The friends of other days,
While tender memories and sweet
Call forth the song we raise.

Across the distance of the years
A backward glance we cast;
Life's morning bright and brief appears,
In halo of the past.

The heat and burden of the day
Our portion now we see,
And in our work we live, we pray
May it established be.

Our hearts grow restful as the bright
Full years of life increase;
The path behind us lies in light,
Before us, leads to peace.

THE SEA-SHORE.

THE slowly ebbing tide
Creeps backward from the shore,
While, fathomless and wide,
The solemn sea before
Rolls outward evermore.

The surge-swept sands find peace
From tossing to and fro ;
The waves, in glad release,
Out from the shallows flow,
And ever wider grow.

The sunset splendor bright
Across the ocean gleams
And crowns the sea with light ;
And from its golden beams
O'er life the glory streams.

For if each outward sign
Is shadow of a thought,
Analogies divine
Are found wherever sought,
And beauty is with inner meaning fraught.

SUNSET.

CRIMSON, amethyst and gold;
Thus the colors are unrolled
In the glory new and old.

Crimson first, it means unrest;
It is wistfulness expressed;
It is longing manifest.

Then the amethyst appears;
Truth shall conquer all our fears;
Patience will outlast the years.

Boats set forth with purple oar
On a sea without a shore,
Reaching to the evermore.

Golden glow o'er mountains grand
Lingers last; in light they stand;
Peaceful is the sunset land.

UPON THE HEIGHTS.

UPON the heights, beneath the sky,
Where only cloud-land shadows lie,
Where Nature peace serene bestows,
And life in every breeze that blows,
There find we rest, my heart and I,
Forget to question whence and why,
Forget our grief and misery,
For gladness comes and sorrow goes,
Upon the heights.

Such visions mortal eyes descry
That souls grow strong to do and die;
They find, beyond the realm of woes,
The hills of God, where dwells repose,
And struggle ends in victory,—
Upon the heights.

LIFE.

A FIRE-FLY gleam amid the gloom of night;
A bubble bright, that bursts and disappears;
A Summer day amid the countless years;
A flower whose beauty fades with fading light;
A meteor that flashes on our sight
And vanishes; a rainbow made of tears;
A brief existence, fraught with hopes and fears,
Yet catching gleams of radiance heavenly bright;
A tale that's told; a vision incomplete;—
And yet there vibrates still a tone sublime
Within the measure that our pulses beat;
A melody that lives when hopes are riven;
An echo of the everlasting chime,—
Life's music, "sad as earth, and sweet as Heaven."

SINCE SHE IS DEAD.

From the German of Moritz Hartmann.

SINCE she is dead, assurance grows in me
That life immortal must be given ;
My sad heart feels that tenderly
Love bends to comfort me from Heaven,
Since she is dead.

Since she is dead I have grown brave and strong ;
I know what hearts may bear of sorrow.
What weariness shall do me wrong ?
What shall I fear in life's to-morrow,
Since she is dead ?

Since she is dead my heart will hold for aye
A vision of transfigured beauty ;
A holy angel guards my way
And guides in paths of duty,
Since she is dead.

Since she is dead a high and steadfast wal.
Has girt me round with sweet seclusion ;

In vain is restless Pleasure's call;
Joy's vassals venture no intrusion,
Since she is dead.

Since she is dead, within my secret heart
The deepest peace is gently sinking;
The soul, with closed eyes, sits apart,
Anticipating, more than thinking,
Since she is dead.

PARTING.

From the German of Spitta.

OF what avail this weeping,
That vainly breaks my heart?
We both are in God's keeping;
From Him we do not part.
This bond forever holds us,
In spite of time and place;
The love of God enfolds us,—
Unites us by His grace.

Hands clasp and then we sever;
We cross the land and sea,
And yet remain forever
In deepest unity.
We lose familiar faces;
We keep within His care
Whose presence fills all spaces,
Whose love is everywhere.

We say, "I here, thou yonder;
Thou goest and I stay;"

And yet, where'er we wander
He gives the light, the way.
We speak of ways dividing;
We sadly say good-bye;
Yet trust His tender guiding
To whom we all are nigh.

Then why should it so grieve us
That paths diverge below?
His love will never leave us,
With Him we all may go,
Blessed by the same protection,
Led by the same dear hand,
In the same sure direction,
Into one Fatherland.

Then let no bitter grieving
The hour of parting fill;
In love divine believing,
We trust our Father's will.
'Tis love divine that giveth
The earthly friendship sweet;
'Tis by His love it liveth,
In Him 'tis made complete.

WHITHER?

From the German of Julius Sturm.

WHITHER, thou rushing stream? thy quest?
"Away to the vale I flee;
Because I am weary I will rest
Within the quiet sea."

Whither, thou waving wind? thy quest?
"Far, far away I roam;
Because I am weary I will rest
In rocky, mountain home."

Whither, thou passing cloud? thy quest?
"I know a barren lea;
Because I am weary, there for rest
Is place appointed me."

Whither, thou flying bird? thy quest?
"Deep in the forest shade,
Because I am weary, I will rest
Where none shall make afraid."

Whither, thou soul of mine? thy quest?
"High over the clouds above,
Because I am weary, I will rest
In the everlasting Love."

EXCEPTION TO A NATURAL LAW.

From the German of Friedrich von Logau.

WHO said, by Nature's fixed decree
No vacuum can ever be,
Had never seen the empty space
That in my pocket-book finds place.

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